

ASSESSING TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES IN THE USE OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT IN REBUILDING TRUST IN STUDENTS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

The paper assessed teachers' competencies in the use of continuous assessment in rebuilding trust in students' academic achievement in Rivers State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 5523 teachers (4000 urban and 1523 rural) in public junior secondary schools in six local government areas of Rivers State. The sample of the study was one thousand nine hundred and two (1,902) teachers comprising 502 rural teachers and 1400 urban teachers in public junior secondary schools in the study area. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane and the stratified random sampling technique. The study adopted the use of questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was titled "Teachers Competencies in the Use of Continuous Assessment in Rebuilding Student Academic Achievement Questionnaire (TECCARSAAQ)", mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that secondary school teachers in Rivers State have low competence in test construction whereas they are competent in record keeping. A far reaching conclusion was made and recommended among others that Measurement and evaluation experts should be regularly sent by the ministry of education to train and re-train business studies teachers and inspectors and supervisors should monitor the practice of continuous assessment in schools effectively.

Keywords: Teachers' Competencies, Continuous Assessment, Rebuilding Trust, Academic Achievements

Introduction

Trust is essentially vital for successful cooperation and effectiveness in every organization; it facilitates dialogue and even helps to resolve both local and international political conflicts. Trust enhances the ability to change and support radical changes in any system, particularly in the education sector. This is because trust is said to aid in resourcefulness and innovations in education. Education in Nigeria has witnessed progressive reforms geared towards the improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of the country and its citizens. One of the major reforms witnessed by the Nigeria education is the introduction of continuous assessment; it will be very difficult for educational administrators to implement this reform if teachers are not using the appropriate strategies in continuous assessment particularly in test construction and keeping students' records.

Continuous assessment is a mechanism whereby the final grading of a student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor uses data from tests, checklists, rating scales, projects, observation, and interviews to systematically take account of students' performances during a given period of schooling (Anunkwo, 2012). Patrick and Uvietesivwi (2018) observed that teachers in secondary schools make use of continuous assessment in different ways, such as test construction, students record-keeping, diagnostic use of information, interpreting student scores from continues assessment and communication of students' results etc. These processes allow teachers to observe numerous tasks about student knowledge and their ability to complete a given task. The importance of good test construction in the teaching and learning process that goes on in classroom cannot be over emphasized.

Hamafyelto, Hamman-Tukur and Hamafyelto, (2015) posited that test construction competence and quality are essential tools required by any teacher if teaching and learning goals are to be achieved. The significance of tests in a school system is bountiful since it is the means by which any meaningful educational goal is attained. The potency of learning objectives, embedded in a school curriculum remain the most cardinal sign post for educational growth, institutional excellence and individual aspirations. Teachers who are custodians of knowledge must be seen to be competent in measuring learning goals with precision and accuracy. Similarly, the tools with which these learning goals are measured must also be precise and accurate to be able to measure what the teacher intends to measure and evaluate (Hamafyelto, Hamman-Tukur & Hamafyelto, 2015). These cannot be possible without teachers themselves being competent in the art and science of handling the tools; which are the tests and examinations (Helenrose & Di-Donato, 2013).

The issue of validity and reliability of classroom-based achievement tests in Nigerian secondary schools have engaged the attention of researchers (Baker, 2003; Dosumu, 2002; Alele-Williams, 2002). Agu, Onyekuba and Anyichie (2013) reiterated that these researchers observed that most of these classroom-based tests in Nigeria lack validity and reliability because teachers seem to lack test construction skills and thus cannot construct good achievement tests. They observed that most tests used for continuous assessments and end of term examinations in the secondary schools contain ambiguous and misleading questions which may be the reason why some of the students fail these tests. The implication of this is that most teachers lack competencies in test construction and may be using poorly constructed tests to measure students' achievements in various school subjects (Agu, Onyekuba & Anyichie, 2013).

Agu etal, (2013) posited that when students' achievement levels are not properly measured and interpreted, the teachers and school administrators will not be able to provide educational opportunities and support each individual student needs. Testing provides feedback on which educational decisions are made. These decisions may be the ones that require information about the success of learning programmes or about students who have reached particular levels of skill and knowledge (Izard, 2005). Tests are primarily used in making classroom-level decisions and are designed with particular reference to the course objectives/learning goals of a specific course, study program or class (Mahajan, 2015). Eleje, Abanobi and Obasi (2017) stated that test evaluates students' understanding of a particular instructional domain in order to make decisions regarding the advancement or capability of the

students. Decisions made on students by using achievement tests can be biased if the achievement test used is not valid and reliable. Thus, it is expected that the schools should have enough valid and reliable achievement tests teachers for assessing how far their students at each level have learnt what was taught as well as to prepare them for external examinations. Inadequate valid academic performance test according to Allen (2005) it is a reason many teachers continue to assign invalid grades to students.

Abida and Muhammad (2011) stated that a typical method for creating tests, in all subjects, based on objectives, involves constructing a test blueprint for each grade and content area. A test blueprint usually specifies the extent of content within the tests while item specification specifies the range of difficulty for test items, and the structure of the test. This blueprint should be linked directly with content standards. Most commonly, test blueprints are arranged around content areas by noting each standard and objective that is tapped by this content goal. Often, an approximately equal number of test items are constructed corresponding with each content area of the blueprint. Test construction involves a couple of steps and scrupulous analysis, as well as substantial time (Esomonu & Agbonkpolo, 2010). Therefore, there is a dire need for experts to construct valid and reliable academic performance tests for use in senior secondary levels in Nigeria. McClelland in Ennis (2008) explained that competencies is the ability to apply or use knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics to successfully perform critical tasks, specific functions or operate in a given role or position. Competencies are specific qualities that are casually related to effective and superior performance. Competencies may include knowledge, skills and abilities. Nicklaus (2011) noted that knowledge, attitudes and skills are content areas needed to produce a well trained professional.

The teacher should possess skills in record keeping and preparation of report. The introduction of the continuous assessment indicates that the teachers should have the attitude to appropriately keep the results of the students' performance. Agbeagbu (2004) explained that the most difficult problem facing assessment in Nigeria is poor record keeping. One of the hallmarks of best practices in assessment is that of good record keeping attitude. Chikwe and Sunday (2014) explained that keeping of accurate records in the educational system is very necessary in the practice of continuous assessment. This is due to the fact that the continuous assessment is cumulative and no aspect of the performance of students should be thrown away. In addition to record keeping, such records should also be confidential. Harbor-Peters (1999) listed confidentiality of information from continuous assessment as a yardstick of effective implementation of continuous assessment. Agwagah (2004) observed that information from assessment are meant to be confidential and should be treated as such. It is important that files containing information continuous assessment be made confidential.

Asuk (2016) posits that secondary school teachers should possess knowledge and awareness of the effective implementation of the continuous assessment. The most important criteria that a teacher should possess in the use of the continuous assessment is the knowledge and awareness of the record keeping. It is when the teacher is knowledgeable and aware of the record keeping that he/she will be better equipped to effectively use the continuous assessment. The teachers do the computations and interpretation of students' performance or scores. The computation and weighing of students' scores demand special skills. For teachers to provide

good and reliable results and interpretations of students' performance, they require computation skills which are appropriate for record keeping. Chikwe (2017) noted that this is one of the major problems of secondary school teachers in the implementation of continuous assessment. Most teachers do not like quantitative activities and this is one of the major problems confronting the implementation of continuous assessment in secondary schools in the Rivers state, Nigeria. Also, the setting and grading of student's continuous assessment score is very important because it is the only way to determine the level of students' academic achievement. It is therefore imperative that there should be objectivity in the scoring or grading of continuous assessment and in the collation of scores in the continuous assessment.

Statement of the Problem

Continuous assessment which borders on three cardinal domains viz: psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains cannot be handled with kid gloves when discussing teaching and learning in general and junior secondary schools in particular this is because learning centers on these three domains, but it is observed that most teachers in junior secondary do not or lack the competencies required to exhibit this all important functions of teaching (test constructions and records keeping) which greatly affects student's academic achievements. Could this lack of vital teaching skills but attributed to negligence or lack of knowledge needed in test construction or record keeping? Researcher participant experience showed a very rare possibility of getting a sound classroom teacher with vast knowledge in test construction and record keeping.

The researcher also, observed that most of the serving teachers in junior secondary schools do not possess the competencies required in the construction, development and validation of instrument for assessment this situation is very worrisome and could have a negative effect on learners' performance in business studies. Herein lies the credence to assess teacher's competencies in the use of continuous assessment in rebuilding trust in students' academic achievement.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do secondary school teachers' competency in test construction enhance their assessment of student's academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do secondary school teachers' competency in record keeping enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of rural and urban junior secondary school business studies teachers in Rivers State on the extent teachers' competency in test construction enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of rural and urban junior secondary school business studies teachers in Rivers State on the extent teachers' competency in record keeping enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 5523 teachers (4000 urban and 1523 rural teachers) in public junior secondary schools in six local government areas of Rivers State. These are Emuoha, Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor, Andoni and Asari Toru Local Government Areas. The sample of the study comprised one thousand nine hundred and two (1,902) teachers comprising 502 rural teachers and 1400 urban teachers in public junior secondary schools in the study area. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane and the stratified random sampling technique. The study adopted the use of questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was titled “Teachers Competencies in the use of Continuous Assessment in Rebuilding Student Academic Achievement Questionnaire” (TECCARSAAQ)”. The instrument was validated by 2 experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Z test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do secondary school teachers’ competencies in test construction enhance assessment of students’ academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Teachers’ Competencies in Test Construction in enhancing Students’ Academic Achievement (*n* = 2169)

S/N	Items	Responses				Remark
		Rural=502		Urban 1400		
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	I can construct different instruments for use in continuous assessment	2.08	0.33	2.18	0.39	Low Extent
2	I can utilize both teacher made test and standardize test in continuous assessment	2.24	0.37	2.05	0.38	Low Extent
3	Sometimes I use questionnaire in my CA practice	1.98	0.28	2.01	0.31	Low Extent
4	I also use checklist in my continuous assessment practice	2.05	0.31	1.99	0.29	Low Extent
5	I use rating scale in assessing students in CA	1.73	0.22	1.70	0.21	Low Extent
6	I use interview for the assessment of my students	1.91	0.26	2.00	0.31	Low Extent
7	I use sociometric technique to assess students’ interaction in continuous assessment	1.68	0.19	1.70	0.21	Low Extent
8	I can easily interpret the scores generated from CA	2.62	0.54	2.50	0.52	High Extent

9	I find it difficult to assess the affective domain in the continuous assessment practice	2.74	0.59	2.81	0.61	High Extent
10	I can easily assess the psychomotor domain component of the continuous assessment	1.83	0.23	1.60	0.20	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.09	0.32	2.05	0.34	Low Extent

Criterion mean value = 2.50

Data in Table 1 indicated that secondary school teachers have low competence in test construction and this have affected students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Data in Table 4.1 showed that the teachers (from rural and urban schools) are competent in interpreting scores generated from continuous assessment ($\bar{x} = 2.62$ & 2.50 for rural and urban teachers respectively), yet they have low competence in constructing different instrument for continuous assessment ($\bar{x} = 2.08$ & 2.18 for rural and urban teachers respectively), they have low competence in utilizing both teacher made test and standardized test in continuous assessment ($\bar{x} = 2.24$ & 2.05 for rural and urban teachers respectively), they have low competence in the use of questionnaire ($\bar{x} = 1.98$ and 2.01 for rural and urban teachers respectively), checklist ($\bar{x} = 2.05$ & 1.99), rating scale ($\bar{x} = 1.73$ & 1.70), interview ($\bar{x} = 1.91$ & 2.00) and socio-metric technique ($\bar{x} = 1.68$ & 1.70) respectively in the practice of continuous assessment. In addition, they find it difficult to assess the affective domain ($\bar{x} = 2.74$ & 2.81) and have low competence in the assessment of psychomotor domain ($\bar{x} = 1.83$ & 1.60). The low competence of the teachers in the construction of various tests or instruments is confirmed by the grand mean ($\bar{x} = 2.09$ and 2.05 for rural and urban teachers respectively). This result indicates that teachers of business studies posses' low competence in test construction, thus affecting the academic achievement of students in the subject in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. The standard deviation reveals the extent of agreement of the teachers on their competencies in test construction, implementation of continuous assessment and students' achievement in secondary schools in the area.

Research Question 2: To what extent do secondary school teachers' competencies in record keeping enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Teachers' Competencies Record Keeping in enhancing Students' Academic Achievement ($n = 2169$)

S/N	Items	Responses				Remark
		Rural N=503		Urban N=1400		
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
11	I like keeping record of students' (CA record)	2.69	0.56	2.70	0.57	High Extent
12	I can keep record of students'	2.23	0.18	2.40	0.35	Low Extent

13	CA record for years Keeping students records helps in describing student's behaviour overtime and academic achievement	2.65	0.52	2.56	0.50	High Extent
14	Keeping of students record helps for further use	2.19	0.26	2.23	0.28	Low Extent
15	I have devise effective ways of keeping students CA record	2.32	0.34	2.36	0.30	Low Extent
16	It is easier to keep record of students CA achievement than to forget it	2.16	0.55	2.30	0.42	Low Extent
17	Keeping record of students CA achievement makes students and colleagues to have confidence in the teacher	2.63	0.49	2.88	0.61	High Extent
18	I easily misplace students' CA records	2.61	0.46	2.59	0.50	High Extent
19	It is not necessary to keep students CA record after they have left the school	2.58	0.43	2.60	0.56	High Extent
20	Keeping students' CA record makes the teaching profession interesting and enjoyable	2.54	0.41	2.61	0.46	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.56	0.42	2.52	0.45	High Extent

Criterion mean value = 2.50

Data in Table 2 revealed that secondary school teachers like to keep the record of students' continuous assessment ($\bar{x} = 2.69$ and 2.70 for rural and urban teachers respectively), they agree that keeping students' continuous assessment record helps to describe students' behaviour overtime ($\bar{x} = 2.65$ and 2.56 respectively), keeping record of students continuous assessment makes students and other colleagues to have confidence in the teachers ($\bar{x} = 2.63$ and 2.88 respectively). The teachers also indicated that it is necessary to keep students' continuous assessment record after they have left the school ($\bar{x} = 2.58$ and 2.60 respectively) and that keeping students' continuous assessment record makes the teaching profession interesting and enjoyable ($\bar{x} = 2.54$ and 2.61). On the other hand, data in Table 4.2 revealed that the teachers find it difficult to keep record of students continuous assessment achievement for years ($\bar{x} = 2.23$ and 2.40 respectively), they easily misplace record of students' continuous assessment for future use ($\bar{x} = 2.19$ and 2.23), they have low competence in devising effective ways of keeping students' continuous assessment record ($\bar{x} = 2.32$ and 2.36). Thus, the grand mean score ($\bar{x} = 2.56$ and 2.52 for rural and urban teachers respectively) confirmed that the teachers have low competence in record keeping and this have affected the implementation of continuous assessment and students' academic achievement in secondary schools in the area. This result

indicates that teachers of business studies possess low competence in record keeping, thus affecting the academic achievement of students in the subject in junior secondary schools in Rivers State. The standard deviation revealed the agreement of the teachers on their competence in record keeping for the effective implementation of continuous assessment in secondary schools in the area.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of rural and urban junior secondary school business studies teachers in Rivers State on the extent teachers' competency in test construction enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement.

Table 3: Z-Test Analysis of Hypothesis 1 Using the Z-test Statistics

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Z-cal	Z-crit	SL	Decision
Rural Teachers	502	2.09	0.32	1900	0.014	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Urban Teachers	1,400	2.05	0.34					

The analyzed data in Table 3 showed that Z-calculated value of 0.014 is less than the Z-critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 significance level and 1900 degree of freedom indicating that, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of rural and urban junior secondary school business studies teachers in Rivers State on the extent teachers' competency in test construction enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement. This means that the null hypothesis was accepted.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of rural and urban junior secondary school business studies teachers in Rivers State on the extent teachers' competency in record keeping enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement.

Table 4: Z-Test Analysis of Hypothesis 2 Using the Z-test Statistics

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Z-cal	Z-crit	SL	Decision
Rural	502	2.56	0.42	1900	0.94	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Urban	1400	2.52	0.45					

The analyzed data in Table 3 showed that Z-calculated value of 0.94 is less than the Z-critical value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 significance level and 1900 degree of freedom indicating that, there is no significant difference in the responses of rural and urban junior secondary school business studies teachers in Rivers State on the extent teachers' competency in record keeping enhance their assessment of students' academic achievement. This means that the null hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding in research question one (Table 1) shows that most secondary school business studies teachers have low competence in test construction and this have negatively affected their ability in test construction and students' academic achievement in Rivers State. This low competence is shown in their inability to construct different instrument for use in

continuous assessment, in utilizing teacher made test and standardized test in continuous assessment and inability in the use of questionnaire in continuous assessment practice in business studies. Also, most of the secondary school business studies teachers are unable to use checklist, rating scale and interview and sociometric techniques as well as inability to effectively assess the affective domain. When the differences in the mean responses of the secondary school teachers was subjected to z test (Table 3), the mean difference of the business studies teacher's responses on their competencies in test construction was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of probability. This finding is in agreement with Agu, Onyekuba and Anyichie (2013) that most of the secondary school teachers in the Rivers State have poor knowledge skills and competencies in constructing various instruments for use in continuous assessment practice in the area. Also, Esomonu and Agbonkpolo (2010) that there is a dire need for experts to construct valid and reliable academic performance tests in use in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

The finding of research question two (Table 2) revealed that most secondary school business studies teachers have low competence in record keeping and this have affected the implementation of continuous assessment and students' academic achievement in Rivers State. This result shows that most of the secondary school teachers find it difficult to keep record of students' continuous assessment performance, they have low competence in the keeping of students' record of continuous assessment achievement for future use, and most of the teachers have low competence in devising effective ways of keeping students continuous assessment record in business studies. Also, most of the business studies teachers easily misplace record of students' continuous assessment performance. When the mean difference in the responses of secondary school business studies teachers from the states of the Rivers State was subjected to z test (Table 4), the mean difference of the teachers' responses on their competencies in record keeping was found not to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of probability. This result is in agreement with Ukwije (2015) and Chikwe (2017) that most teachers in secondary schools have low competence in keeping record of students' continuous assessment achievement and this constitute major problem of the teachers in the effective implementation of continuous assessment.

Conclusion

The study therefore concluded by establishing the fact that the strategies teacher uses in the classroom have far reaching implications not only for student's academic performance specially but also for the nature of instructional feedback and assessment reports on such students. It becomes very imperative for the teachers to adopt test construction and records keeping as a very crucial systematic device which is assumed to measure what has been learnt and the extent of the curriculum have been covered.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Measurement and evaluation experts should be sent by the ministry of education to train and re-train business studies teachers in order to improve their competencies in continuous assessment.

2. Inspectors and supervisors from the Post Primary Schools Board Universal Basic Education Board and Ministry of Education should monitor the practice of continuous assessment in schools effectively.
3. Facilities for the effective practice of continuous assessment should be provided by government to enable teachers utilize them in their respective schools

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